Lessons from El Salvador: Guideposts for U.S. Military Assistance in Latin America

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Lessons from El Salvador: Guideposts for U.S. Military Assistance in Latin America

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Thesis: The essay tests the hypothesis that the United States can reshape the ethos of Latin American militaries by infusing more United States military personnel into security assistance programs, thereby promoting the course of democratization in Latin America.

Discussion: The Latin American legacy of military dominance over government creates a civil-military climate that does not adapt easily to today's growing emphasis on democratic ideals. As more Latin American nations embrace democracy, they increase the imperative for their militaries to shed their rigidly Praetorian Guard ethos and adopt military virtues more supportive of democratic processes, with subordination to legitimately elected civil authority representing the core of their transition. Frustrations may lead the militaries to abandon the attempt at transition and opt for more traditional--and oppressive--forms of governance on their own terms, thereby retarding the progress of democracy and thwarting U.S. security interests.

The U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) is aware of the problems that permeate Latin American stability, and by extension affect the security of the United States. However, USSOUTHCOM's diminishing resources reduce the Command's ability to implement effective security assistance programs through which to retain a continuous positive influence on Latin American militaries. The disconnect between the potential threat to U.S. security interests and the deficiencies in the U.S. strategic capability to enlarge the community of democratic Latin American nations compels USSOUTHCOM to seek alternative ways and means to execute its strategy. An alternative exists.

The U.S. military involvement in the El Salvadoran War (1979-1993) provides a case study of the interaction between two different military ethos. Since the war stemmed from the oppressions of a military *junta,* it offers many insights into how the U.S. Armed Forces can influence a repressive, military-backed oligarchy transition to a democracy with a supportive military establishment. The activities of the U.S. Military Group, El Salvador (USMIILGP, ELSAL) offer particularly poignant examples of the impact that a relatively small advisory group can have upon a highly authoritarian and often brutal army.

Conclusions or Recommendations: The struggle in El Salvador reflected an undercurrent of chaos and violence that lies dormant in many Latin American countries today. The U.S. must not

wait for another full-scale insurgency to flare up in Latin America before its takes action. For countries with simmering problems, the U.S. should devise a long-term strategy that expands the in-country security assistance organization in the mold of the USMILGP, ELSAL. Like their predecessors in El Salvador, a relatively small yet influential group U.S. military advisors can provide a means to mentor Latin American militaries as they transition, and improve Latin American civil-military relations at a much reduced cost to the United States.

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CHAPTER 1

THE CHALLENGE: TO ENCOURAGE MILITARY VIRTUES

Democracy is the best system of government yet devised, but it suffers from one grave defect--it does not encourage those military virtues upon which, in an envious world, it must frequently depend for its survival.

Major Guy du Maurier, 1865-1915

Civil-military relations in most Latin American nations suffer from a recurring theme: military establishments often repress the citizenry whom they are supposed to defend. The Latin American legacy of military dominance over government creates a civil-military climate that does not adapt easily to today's growing emphasis on democratic ideals. Many Latin American nations are wrestling with the proper roles for their militaries within their developing democratic societies. Despite their best efforts to move toward democracy, several nations retain a strong potential for reverting to oppressive military-backed authoritarianism. Such a negative turn in governance runs contrary to one pillar of the U.S. national security strategy, namely enlarging the community of democratic nations.[1] As an element of U.S. strategy, the U.S. Armed Forces participate in security assistance programs throughout Latin America, but the U.S. organizations that implement these programs are not sufficiently staffed to make a significant impact on improving a host nation's (HN) civil-military relations. This essay, therefore, will examine the hypothesis that the U.S. can reshape the ethos of HN militaries by infusing more U.S. military personnel into these programs, thereby promoting the course of democratization in Latin

America.

In the quest to determine whether the U.S. military can mentor the transition of Latin American militaries from their traditional authoritarian elitism to more egalitarian and subservient military establishments, this essay must frame the environment in which the U.S. might implement such a program. First, this paper will address the diverse problems that confront Latin American militaries and identify the common thread among them. Next, it will assess the ways and means with which the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) implements security assistance programs in the region and highlight shortcomings within those programs (see Appendix A for pertinent definitions). These two processes will illustrate the disconnect between a potential threat to U.S. security interests and the deficiencies in the U.S. regional strategy of enlarging the community of democratic Latin American nations.

The essay will then turn to the U.S. military involvement in the El Salvadoran War (1979-1993) as a case study of the interaction between two different military ethos. Since the war stemmed from the oppressions of a military *junta,* it offers many insights into how the U.S. Armed Forces can influence a repressive, military-backed oligarchy transition to a democracy with a supportive military establishment. The activities of the United States Military Group, El Salvador (USMILGP, ELSAL)* offer particularly poignant examples from which to assay the impact that a relatively small advisory group can have upon a highly authoritarian, rigidly hierarchical, and often brutal army.

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*Unless otherwise specified, "USMILGP, ELSAL" will henceforth appear simply as "USMILGP."

The examination of the tribulations and professionalization of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) will illustrate similarities between the Salvadorans and their present-day *Latino* brothers-in-arms. The study will also examine the strengths and weaknesses of the USMILGP, and correlate the significance of its successes and failures to USSOUTHCOM's current security assistance efforts. This essay will culminate with a proposed set of guideposts for implementing an advisory effort as part of U.S. security assistance throughout Latin America.

CHARTER 2

CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE

The United States contributes to Latin American security through a system of programs known generically as "nation assistance." Only a small part of these programs involves the U.S. Armed Forces, which may make them seem inappropriate venues for military-to-military interaction; yet, they are the principal ways through which the U.S. military may influence their Latin American counterparts. To determine how the U.S. military can affect the transition of Latin American militaries from authoritarian instruments of power to professional institutions subordinate to civil authority, one must understand the strategic environment in which the U.S. Armed Forces interact with their *Latino* counterparts. As outline below, one must first appreciate the diverse problems that confront Latin American militaries, then identify the common thread among them that the U.S. can exploit to achieve its regional strategic goals. Next, one must examine the ways and means with which USSOUTHCOM implements nation assistance in the region and highlight shortcomings within its programs. As these strategic considerations will illustrate, few of the U.S. nation assistance programs have the wherewithal to effectively engage the militaries of Latin America, leaving the U.S. with some unnecessary gaps in its regional security strategy.

Latin American Military Roles in Transition

Twenty countries of Central and South America currently fall within the strategic area of responsibility of USSOUTHCOM. The nations of this vast region, generically identified as

"Latin America," retain distinctive cultural traits based on their unique heritage, but they also share broad common backgrounds. Among their common cultural aspects are highly polarized social classes and military-backed governance. These influences endowed most Latin American nations with an aristocratic notion that the right to govern stems from having the capability to wrest political power and retain it by force. To effectively interact with Latin American militaries, U.S. strategists must understand that their *Latino* counterparts' traditions are deeply rooted in either running governments or enforcing their rule rather than supporting them from a subordinate role.

Historically, Latin American militaries are more accustomed to protecting their nascent governments against internal threats than defending their nations against external enemies. As the nations of the region gained their independence, few had occasion to defend themselves against a neighbor. The border dispute between Ecuador and Peru, and the continuing disagreements over Tierra del Fuego between Argentina and Chile exemplify the external threats these nations perceive and provide justification for maintaining military forces for national defense. However, the armed forces of most Latin American nations have much more frequently fought internal conflicts ranging from violent civil wars to drawn-out insurgencies.[2] Internal struggles are further exploited by insurgents, narcotraffickers, and highly armed bands of criminals who use terrorism and guerrilla tactics to subvert local authority. The armed forces take sides, either with the beleaguered government, or with the opposition. The victor of such a conflict then heavily depends upon its victorious military to maintain order, and protect it from a resurgence of the opposition or intervention by some external threat. Thus, most Latin Americans have never fully understood the purpose of armed forces within democratic societies.

Latin American armed forces' traditional roles as the keystones of government are increasingly becoming ambiguous. The concerted move toward democratization expressed during the December 1994 Summit of the Americas in Miami spurred Latin American civilian leaders to openly challenge their military elite's dominant role in political processes. The subordination of the military to civilian control is a central issue in the democratization process. In most cases, uniformed officers direct their respective armed forces and report directly to the nation's chief executive. As long as the militaries are not fully accountable to their legitimately elected governments, they will view themselves above democratically elected officials and retain the potential to wrest political power. Figure 1 reflects the mix of civil-military situations that exists in Latin America today.

SPECTRUM OF STABILITY	SUBSERVIENCE OF THE MILITARY			
	SUBORDINATION	**TRANSITIONING TO SUBORDINATION**	**AUTONOMOUS**	**NOT APPLICABLE**
PEACE	Uruguay	Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay	Argentina, Chile	Costa Rica, French Guiana, Guyana, Belize, Surinam (countries at peace, with national police forces or gendarmeries)
POST-CONFLICT VIOLENCE		El Salvador, Panama	Nicaragua	
SOME TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE		Bolivia, Honduras		
INTERNAL WAR	Colombia	Peru	Guatemala	
Data on Venezuela not available; while the country is at peace, elements of its Army revolted in 1992.				

Figure 1: Civil-Military Relations in Latin American Nations[3]

More than one Latin American military establishment is likely to feel pushed aside by the growing emphasis on democracy, yet may not understand why a weak or inexperienced democratic government might view military power with suspicion. Dr. Richard Downes,

Director of Communications for the University of Miami's North-South Center, provides a sound explanation for the difficulties many states and their militaries are encountering in their transition to democratization:

> The military's Praetorian education, [and] its lack of experience in working with legislative bodies, [combined with] a pronounced shortage of civilians with expertise in military and security matters produces…. a vagueness about what constitutes valid national security interests, as opposed to those of the military institution, and about how . . .the armed forces should be engaged in protecting or promoting them.... [Democracy's] failure to resolve grating social inequities has led to persistent questions about whether democracy is credible, whether the nature of national security has changed, and how the role of the armed forces in its protection can be explained.[4]

The array of problems that confront some nations undermines their ability to govern effectively, much less protect their people.[5] In turn, ineffective governments will yield to military establishments who feel they have the power--if not the inherent obligation--to forcefully restore order. The 1992 military-backed coup de e'tat in Peru, the 1993 militarily led coup in Venezuela, and the 1994 coup attempt in Guatemala highlight the dangers that weak governments face. They also underscore the historical inclination for Latin American militaries to take government into their own hands. The recriminations and turmoil that coups generate upset the progress of democratization. While some states stand on relatively firm democratic ground, most of their neighbors face the challenges outlined above. Since the theme of the current U.S. *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement (NSS)* centers on "enlarging the community of democratic nations,"[6] the U.S. must take actions to accomplish that strategic goal. Those actions include assisting Latin American nations with programs that promote their security, including the development of military roles and missions supportive of democratic processes.

Deficiencies in Current U.S. Nation Assistance

Latin American proclivity for trying to resolve political problems with military solutions heightens the importance of the U.S. military role in the region. As Joint Pub 3-07.1 notes, the U.S. Armed Forces play a crucial role in peacetime engagement because

> military officials have greater access to and credibility with HN regimes that are heavily influenced or dominated by their own military. The ability of the US [sic] military to influence the professionalism of the HN military and thus their democratic process is considerable. In such cases, success may depend on US representatives being able to persuade host military authorities to lead or support reform efforts aimed at eliminating or reducing corruption and human rights abuses.[7]

The U.S. remains militarily engaged through nation assistance programs. The primary avenues for providing nation assistance are foreign internal defense (FID) and security assistance. On several occasions, the U.S. has employed both ways to such an integrated extent that they appeared indistinguishable; however, they are not synonymous. Both play an important role in peacetime engagement throughout Latin America today, yet the U.S. is not adequately resourcing either.

The prerequisites for a U. S.-sponsored FID effort connote an imminent or existing state of unrest within the HN (see Appendix A). As noted earlier, several Latin American states face dangers that should generate a U.S. nation assistance effort, yet the U.S. seems too lethargic to act. At a 1996 conference on *Managing Contemporary Conflict* hosted by the U.S. Army War College, several conferees expressed their concern that the U.S. continues to have problems articulating its nation assistance strategies; this in turn leads U.S. agencies, especially the military, to take their FID efforts in directions that diverge from Executive intent.[8] The implications of this point regarding FID is that the U.S. should focus its nation assistance effort *before* a crisis arises in order to preempt threats to the HN's security. Rather than wait until a

crisis requires an FID effort, the U.S. and its HN partner can employ the peacetime pillar of nation assistance, security assistance, but, like FID, it also has shortcomings.

Security assistance covers a wide range of programs that the U.S. can tailor to meet the needs of a particular HN. USSOUTHCOM conducts a variety of peacetime activities within this rubric, ranging from combined exercises and military-to-military exchanges to meetings and conferences with Latin American militaries. Numerous U.S. mobile training teams (MTTs) and deployments for training (DFTs)[9] augment these activities. The Command also promotes regional cooperation and stresses human rights and civil-military relations in every venue. The U.S. conducts these programs during peacetime to bolster the HN's security posture and concurrently enhance U.S. regional stability goals.

The U.S. governmental organizations and military personnel who comprise security assistance organizations (SAOs) within the HNs are critical to U.S. security assistance goals. Their members interact with their HN counterparts on a daily basis, thereby linking the HN's security to U.S. policy and strategy. General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA, recent USCINCSOUTH, asserts that "[SAOs] are our principal liaisons to the regions' militaries... [They] are our nation's strategic scouts; they know the players and the culture."[10] Yet, their military cadres, known generically as military groups, consist of a handful of field grade officers whose assignments demand most of their time at the embassy. Of the sixteen SAOs that represent USSOUTHCOM throughout Latin America, the largest (in Colombia) consists of only five officers to support an active HN military establishment of 146,400.[11] While SAOs of this size may interface with their HN counterparts at the national level, they cannot influence the HN's officers with any substantial degree of effectiveness. Their infrequent travels afield leave

them little opportunity to interact with the rank and file of the HN military. Unfortunately, the Foreign Assistance Act limits the number of military personnel that may be assigned to a SAO to only six unless exigencies indicate and Congress approves an increase.[12] The occurrence of an "exigency" may accelerate the usually lengthy process of Congressional approval, but will likely result in a more costly FID response.

Ironically, the U.S. *National Military Strategy (NMS)* recognizes that "security assistance . . .provides a cost-effective alternative to maintaining larger US forces in the region.... [and seeks] to reenergize and expand these important programs."[13] How the U.S. will revitalize security assistance remains to be seen. As with nearly all other aspects of military engagement, security assistance programs have been reduced in recent years. Many of the programs that the U.S. employs under the umbrella of security assistance are inadequately manned or funded, thus creating a shortfall between means and the strategic end state, and making them practically ineffective as tools for implementing national strategy.[14] General McCaffrey warns that, "[T]he window of opportunity for deciding how to keep the U.S. military instrument of power engaged in Latin America is closing rapidly."[15] He laments that the number of Latin American military students attending the three U.S. Armed Forces' Spanish-language military schools has dropped by 75 percent since 1989 because of budget cuts, diminishing the U.S.' ability to directly influence the professional development of Latin American military leaders. Additionally, the ongoing U.S. military transition out of Panama coupled with the overall reduction of the military diminishes America's forward presence.

The increasing shortfalls in U.S. nation assistance complicate USSOUTHCOM's attempts to remain engaged with the militaries of Latin America. In the absence U.S. input, the Latin

American militaries that are wrestling with civil-military relations may chart their own courses in directions that diverge from the U.S. security interests. The more authoritarian military establishments will retain a strong potential to wrest political power if they perceive that democratic processes are ineffective. Therefore, USSOUTHCOM must provide Latin American militaries with a continuous and focused military influence that supports democratic processes.

The U.S. can correct part of its security assistance deficiency by restructuring military groups within selected SAOs in the mold of a recently successful example. The U.S. nation assistance program implemented in El Salvador during the 1980s incorporated political, economic, and military aid to thwart an insurgency. The military group expanded to meet the increasing demands of struggling military establishment. The case study of the USMILGP, ELSAL presented in the following chapters will focus on the military aspects of the conflict, for the Salvadoran military was the principal cause of the strife. The study can help frame the context of future U.S. security assistance to Latin America.

CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE EL SALVADORAN WAR

The El Salvadoran War provides a historical window through which strategists can learn how the U.S. Armed Forces may influence Latin American civil-military relations. The first step in understanding the relevance of the El Salvadoran War to today's political-military climate is to familiarize oneself with the nature of the conflict. Since the war occurred during the last years of the Cold War and less than a decade after the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, no one should deny

that these factors had an impact on U.S. involvement. However, a 1987 study of the war captured the conflict's overarching character by stating that, "The struggle between insurgent and incumbent is over who has the moral right to govern."[16] The Cold War and Vietnam issues seem to contradict the issue of morality, and may lead present-day military strategists to summarily discount the relevance of this case study; therefore, the impact of these factors on the employment of the U.S. military in El Salvador merit examination.

A Summary of the War

This summary identifies significant events that relate to the interaction between the Salvadoran and U.S. militaries, and their impact on the insurgents, solely to provide points of reference for the further discussions. The war can be divided into four phases.

Phase I: The Crisis. On 15 October 1979, a military-backed *junta* executed a coup de e'tat ostensibly to redress social injustices and restore civil order. *The junta's* own oppression soon spurred several opposition groups to revolt. For the next two years, the *junta* and the U.S. grappled with various military policies and strategies. Supported by an ill-equipped, poorly trained army of a mere 15,000 men to combat 7,000 guerrillas,[17] the *junta* took drastic, often brutal measures to retain control. Army extremists committed atrocities in the name of internal security. Paradoxically, they were creating more insurgents.

A council rebel leaders focused on the myriad transgressions perpetrated by the ESAF as justification for their actions, giving the insurrection a moral context and drawing more Salvadorans to the rebel cause. Unifying under the banner of the *Frente **F**arabundo **M**arti para*

*la **L**iberacion **N**acional* (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, or *FMLN),* they embraced communism as their driving ideology, not so much for its tenets as for the material support it generated. Herein they made a critical strategic mistake, for they stoked America's greatest fear: the continuing spread of communism in the Western Hemisphere.

Phase II: Escalation. From the end of 1981 through 1984, the rebellion gathered momentum while the GOES floundered. Though their first bid for victory with the "final offensive" of 1981 failed, the insurgents retained the potential for a military victory. By 1983, their "army" swelled to over 12,000 fighters, and their *masas* (popular supporters) reached 60,000.[18]

The GOES relied on the ESAF to protect the country's infrastructure, gain the people's trust, and quell the insurrection. However, the ESAF began the war doctrinally and psychologically unprepared for a counterinsurgency.[19] The ESAF grew to more than 54,000 troops yet slowly developed as an effective counterinsurgency force. Though they increased unit and individual training, they lacked the material and manpower wherewithal to wage an offensive fight. They remained in a reactive mode, seldom attacking known insurgent strongholds and often committing brutalities that received widespread media attention. In Clausewitzian terms, the ESAF was the GOES' most critical vulnerability, and the source of greatest concern in Salvadoran-U.S. relations.

The Reagan Administration, bent on thwarting communism, lacked a comprehensive strategy partly because of its "newness" to the political arena, and partly because of disagreements between the ambassador in El Salvador and USCINCSOUTH in Panama.

Nevertheless, the administration increased financial and military support to the GOES and eventually developed an acceptable framework for U.S. assistance. The U.S. Congress, wary of involvement in a quagmire reminiscent of Vietnam, lent cautious support to a controversial cause. As a precondition for support, the Congress required Presidential certification of reforms progress in El Salvador.[20] The sensitivity of reform issues and the preconditions set by Congress restrained the U.S. military effort, but had a beneficial though perhaps unintentional result: it forced the ESAF to fight their own war. As Chapters 4 and 5 will explain, this was the most significant strategic decision of the war.

Phase III: Sustainment of the Legitimate GOES. By late 1984, the ESAF slowly began to reverse the military situation. With increasing U.S. financial and advisory support, they expanded their force levels and equipment inventories, and markedly improved their training and readiness. However, the ESAF seemed to reach a plateau in operational effectiveness; while they could fend off the insurgents, they could not defeat them. The GOES realized that a purely military solution would neither win the war nor resolve the causes of the conflict, so it sought to negotiate with the insurgents. Some former army officers who remained politically influential decried the GOES' reforms as treason and twice called for the ESAF to revolt, but the ESAF, now more responsive to the 1983 Salvadoran Constitution and their own new code of conduct, remained loyal to the GOES. More importantly, they increasingly gained popular support.

Unconvinced that they could not force their way into power, the *FMLN* drew from weapons stocks provided by the Vietnamese and neighboring *Sandinistas,* and eagerly accepted funds from Cuba and the Soviets. Deprived of a conventional military victory after their 1989

"final offensive," they, too, realized that negotiation offered them a way of attaining some their objectives. The insurgency thus continued in ebbs and flows for eight indecisive, bloody years until the belligerents signed a truce in Mexico City in January 1992.

Phase IV: Transition to Peace. El Salvador then entered an uneasy transition from war to peace. Dissatisfaction with the truce agreement fragmented some of the *FMLN* factions, and numerous armed bands roamed the countryside, degenerating to banditry. The ESAF, prohibited from field operations by the truce agreement, increased its training in garrison. Bolstered by officers who had experienced U.S. military concepts of leadership, subservience to civilian authority, and systems of training, the ESAF showed signs of self-development. In December 1993, church bells throughout El Salvador tolled in celebration of a long-awaited peace. Fourteen years of hostilities cost over 70,000 Salvadoran lives and over $6 billion in U.S. aid.[21] The U.S. quickly--and drastically--cut its aid to El Salvador. A much-reduced USMILGP continued traditional security assistance at the national level.

Despite their initial handicaps, the legitimate GOES remained in power, negotiated a peace, and transitioned from authoritarianism to democracy. The U.S. walked away from the conflict with a militarily cheap foreign policy victory at the close of the Cold War era. Given the era during which the war occurred, this brief overview can lead one to believe that the war was a by-product of the larger ideological struggle between East and West, and that the U.S. hamstrung its support with fears of waging another Vietnam in "America's backyard." Neither conclusion is correct, for each misses several important lessons regarding the commitment of U.S. military forces to assist a friendly albeit oppressive regime. To ensure one understands the strategic

context under which the U.S. committed military forces to El Salvador, three key issues require closer examination.

Issues That Shaped U.S. Military Support

The Struggle against Communist Expansion. The occurrence of this conflict during the Cold War tends to frame it within a communist-anticommunist context. The upsurge in Soviet defense spending and military venturings during the 1970s, followed closely by the 1979 *Sandinista* victory in Nicaragua support the argument that El Salvador was a battlefield where U.S. forces and resources were employed solely to combat communism. The fight against communist expansion gave the GOES a convenient rallying cry in common with the U.S.; on that basis, the GOES asked for U.S. assistance. Ironically, the rebel factions lent credibility to their enemies' cries of communist expansion; they united under the *FMLN banner* on 11 October 1980 because Fidel Castro insisted in greater unity of effort among the insurgents as a precondition for his support.[22] Arguments that communism framed the context of the war bear elements of truth, but they overshadow the real causes of the war.

All actors had reasons to fight that had little to do with ideology. To several insurgent leaders like Guillermo Ungo, former Vice President-elect of El Salvador and later political leader of the rebel Popular Liberation Front *(FPL),* the insurrection had a moral basis: to stop the cruelly perpetrated by the army and restore a democratically elected government. The root causes of the conflict lay within the country's own military-political culture. His argument generated international moral support and, correctly so, gave many Americans a justifiable reason for opposing U.S. involvement in the war.[23] The insurgents assumed their communist mantle mainly

to gain material support.

Though ideology contributed to the context of the war, the conflict's association with the struggle against communism can mislead anyone who may try to correlate its lessons to situations in today's or tomorrow's strategic environment. In the absence of a monolithic communist threat, Latin American nations still face problems reminiscent of those that foreshadowed the El Salvadoran War. Herein lies one of many lessons that the U.S. may draw from El Salvador. In the absence of a clear-cut threat to U.S. security interests, U.S. policy makers must take greater pains to evaluate the diverse threats that undermine regional stability and implement measures that foster democratization. As in El Salvador, the solution to a given strategic situation will probably include commitment of U.S. forces; the level of U.S. military commitment must correspond to the nature of the threat.

U.S. Intervention. Inasmuch as the El Salvadoran War was not simply a struggle between East and West, neither was it a replay of America's involvement in another conflict against communist expansion, the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, the legacy of U.S. support to corrupt and ineffective regimes in South Vietnam had an impact on the commitment of U.S. military forces in El Salvador. While the American left cited the corruption and oppression of the GOES as reasons for withdrawing support from El Salvador, the right in Congress and in the Armed Forces felt that intervention would demonstrate U.S. resolve to squash subversive insurrections.[24] Fears of repeating the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, which began with the introduction of U.S. advisors, generated heated Congressional and media debate about becoming involved in another drawn-out controversial conflict.[25] One scholar who opposed U.S.

involvement in El Salvador asked, "Is the United States going to commit troops or advisors to another foreign country? Are those troops in danger of being killed? Will the U.S. then introduce even larger numbers of soldiers into the conflict?"[26]

These were--and still are--reasonable questions. No nation knowingly repeats foreign policy and military strategy mistakes that may alienate its citizenry and lead to its defeat. Wary of repeating these blunders in El Salvador, the U.S restrained its military effort. In retrospect, American military intervention was a powerful card best left unplayed, but this was not apparent during the early years of the war.[27] Faced with the potential "nightmare" and Reagan's determination to support the GOES, policy makers had to develop a strategy that kept the U.S. out of a possible quagmire yet quickly sent aid to El Salvador. Development of a strategy unique to El Salvador would take time, and during the early 1980s the GOES seemed to have little of that. The hurried steps taken by the U.S. to devise an acceptable security assistance strategy for El Salvador unintentionally produced the overarching purpose for U.S. support to the Salvadorans.

The *Jus ad Bellum* for U.S. Support. The US-Salvadoran effort during the war's early years often floundered. Even after the first big shock to U.S.-GOES lethargy--the *FMLNs* "final offensive" 1981--attitudes barely changed. Ambassador Deane Hinton (1982-83) frequently disagreed on policy and strategy issues with General Wallace H. Nutting, (USCINCSOUTH, 1979-83). Their disagreement stemmed from a misunderstanding of whether they were in El Salvador to "hang on" against communism, as Hinton saw it, or to "win." In General Nutting's view, "We were preaching the... proper role for the military in a democratic society... [but] the

State Department was not truly convinced that it was a major problem or that it was amenable to military assistance."[28] The differing perceptions between Hinton and Nutting hampered the efforts of the Commander, USMILGP, ELSAL, Colonel John D. Waghelstein (1982-83), to whom fell the responsibility of executing the military assistance plan. His immediate military superior was General Nutting, but the ambassador was his "boss" in country. The strained command relationships within the Country Team hamstrung a focused U.S. effort, without which the U.S. could not devise a rational strategy.[29] At the behest of the GOES and Ambassador Hinton, USCINCSOUTH sent General Fred F. Woerner, Deputy USCINCSOUTH, and a six-man team to San Salvador in the spring of 1982 to conduct a fact-finding study from which to develop a military strategy. After eight weeks of extensive study, they submitted a report that became known as *The Woerner Report.*[30]

The report set the tone for U.S. military support to El Salvador. It identified the ESAF' s transgressions as a principal cause of the insurgency, and recommended a long-term strategy to "professionalize" the ESAF. The ESAF's hierarchy understood they were part of the problem. Then-colonel Rend Emilio Ponce (destined to serve as Minister of Defense) acknowledged that, "[T]he function of the armed forces in a democratic society is to provide support in giving impetus to the democratic process... We must face the fact that we were, at one time, responsible for the brutalities and ill-treatment imposed on the citizens of this country."[31] Jose Napoleon Duarte, member of *the junta* and later President of El Salvador (1984-89), conceded that "[T]he revolutionaries may have had good reason for taking up arms when there was no hope of economic reform, social justice or free election under the tyranny of the oligarchy allied with the armed forces."[32] The legitimacy of the GOES and its accountability to its constituents would

serve as the overarching framework for U.S. assistance. Unlike Vietnam, the U.S. would limit its direct military participation in El Salvador, deploying military advisors to provide the link between the ESAF and the USMILGP; it also let the Salvadorans know that they had to fight their own war.

From the Salvadoran leaders' statements, it may appear that U.S. political pressure compelled them to accept the U.S.-proposed reforms as a condition for U.S. assistance. Certainly the Salvadorans' predicament forced them to recognize their faults; from an outsider's perspective, U.S. diplomacy helped them see those faults. By admitting that their faulty regime was not serving their citizenry, the Salvadorans could not legitimize their governance without achieving reforms, particularly in human rights, which by association meant reforming the ESAF. The Americans and the Salvadorans--and, paradoxically, the insurgents--thus agreed that the root causes of the conflict lay within the realm of civil-military relations. It is within this context that strategists should evaluate U.S. involvement in El Salvador and correlate its lessons to future U.S. military engagement throughout Latin America.

Regardless of the outcome of the struggle against communism, or America's hesitance to commit its military to a controversial insurgency, the war in El Salvador at last had a just cause for U.S. support. Since the ESAF was neither materially nor psychologically prepared to implement concurrent, monumental institutional changes on its own, they would require substantial U.S. aid. However, money and materiel were not enough to decisively shape and sustain the ESAF. The U.S. needed people "in-country" to mentor, observe, assess and report on the progress of the ESAF. As Chapter 4 will explain, these people were the advisors.

CHAPTER 4

THE U.S. MILITARY GROUP, EL SALVADOR: A CASE STUDY

The strategic perspective of the El Salvadoran War surveyed in Chapter 3 provides insights into how geopolitical considerations affected the deployment and employment of U.S. forces to support security assistance. The strategic decisions to limit the U.S. military effort imposed operational limitations upon the USMILGP that at first appeared a hindrance, but gradually had a positive effect on the professionalization of the ESAF. While this seems paradoxical, it demonstrates how a limited yet focused military effort can serve the United States' strategic purpose of improving civil-military relations, and merits closer analysis. Accordingly, this chapter will narrow the focus of the U.S. effort in El Salvador by discussing the USMILGP's mission, how the USMILGP expanded to accomplish that mission, and how its expanded membership--consisting of advisors--executed the mission.

Expansion of the Military Group

Among its several key points, *The Woerner Report* emphasized the need to increase security assistance to El Salvador. This point left little doubt that the USMTLGP would play a significant role in executing whatever strategic plan the Country Team devised. *The Woerner Report* helped the Americans and Salvadorans concur that civil-military relations formed the core of the ESAF's problems. To resolve the problem, the Country Team formulated a plan that underscored the professionalization of the ESAF as an essential element in achieving a successful end to the war. With that military end state in mind, the Country Team developed the

USMILGP's mission and received concurrence from USCINCSOUTH. In essence, the mission statement read: Make the ESAF a professional, self-sufficient force capable of providing for its nation's defense, stressing respect for human rights and subordination to the legitimate civilian government, thereby decreasing ESAF dependence on the U.S. military.[33] The USMILGP finally had a focus; however, the organization still lacked the personnel with which to accomplish such a broad mission. Consequently the USMILGP sought to increase its means to accomplish its ends.

Consensus on an appropriate mission did not end the dissent between Ambassador Hinton and General Nutting. They argued over U.S. force levels in the country. Even after all agreed that the ESAF's deficiencies needed immediate attention, Ambassador Hinton felt that the U.S. could prevent an *FMLN* victory by infusing economic aid to the GOES. Concerned about the "Vietnam scenario," he kept a close eye on the USMILGP's manning level to ensure the U.S. military effort remained in the background. Though he did not set a numerical limit on the number of trainers who were concurrently allowed in country, he permitted the USMILGP to bring in personnel only for temporary duty not to exceed 180 days, mostly as MTTs and DFTs.[34]

Since the U.S. could bring in few trainers, the ESAF had to go out of the country (to the U.S., Honduras and Venezuela) to receive sustained training, usually at a much higher cost to their U.S.-supplied military budget. Worse still, the rapid turnover of USMILGP personnel prevented continuity in the advisory effort by the U.S., and precluded the USMILGP from maintaining personnel "in the field" to observe and assess the ESAF in combat operations. Without observing and assessing, the USMILGP could not properly gauge the effectiveness of training or professionalization efforts. General Nutting argued for longer-term personnel who

could provide consistent advice to the ESAF: "You have to put people in [assignments] and leave them there long enough to know what it is they're trying to do.... [and] build positive relationships with their counterparts."[35] General Nutting got his way, but not until Thomas Pickering replaced Hinton as ambassador. Pickering realized the U.S. effort was disjointed, and quickly set to correct it. Bolstered by a presidential directive that ordered that "the U.S. military presence in El Salvador will be sufficiently augmented to permit the U.S. to better influence the prosecution of the war,"[36] Pickering strengthened Embassy relationships with USCINCSOUTH, and, sometime in mid-1983, allowed assignment of personnel on one-year tours.

The USMILGP then took on a more significant role in the long-term professional development of the ESAF. With more personnel available to go afield, the USMILGP could reach the ESAF units throughout the country. Each of the six infantry brigade commanders, and several Military Detachment *(DM)* commanders had U.S. advisors assigned to their staffs. Sometime in 1983, the USMILGP reached a count of 55 U.S. advisors in country, officially designated as "trainers;" the number stuck.[37] Though the number was not set as limit until after it was reached, the limit "was not capricious," explained Brigadier General Mark R. Hamilton (USMILGP Commander, 1990-92).

> We had built up the number of people that we thought were necessary to do the job at hand.... [T]he 55 had been arrived at without a number in mind so we had the right number of people in place to do the things we were doing at the time, and it was done with an ongoing assessment. When we stopped at 55 we were not left with a ridiculous number; it was useful and usable.[38]

Though the USMILGP complied with the 55 advisor limit, at any unspecified time more than 55 U.S. military personnel served in country because the arrangement with the embassy allowed the USMILGP to tally its personnel in several categories. Personnel assigned to the

USMILGP headquarters, medical teams, and the attaches played a liaison role. DFTs and other programs such as those funded by "ECON-R" (a Central Intelligence Agency cover for intelligence-related training and operations) did not count against the 55, for their personnel were not advising the operating units in the field. The self-imposed limitation and the stringent manner in which the USMILGP managed the 55, explained Ambassador Pickering, "gained congressional confidence in our approach" to assist El Salvador resolve its own war.[39]

The composition of the 55 varied through the years, but they maintained a collective focus: providing operational advice and training to the fighting units, while concurrently observing and assessing their combat efficiency and professional conduct. Fixing their number at 55 had several benefits. It stopped the USMILGP from taking the easy way out of its *advisory* role by just growing and growing. There were ample opportunities to *train* the ESAF with more U.S. personnel, MTTs, and DFTs, but that would have taken the burden of effort away from the ESAF. The limit forced the GOES to clearly recognize that the U.S. was not going to fight the war for them. The ESAF had to assess their own needs and conduct most of their own training. Most importantly, the El Salvadorans rightfully gained greater confidence in their own warfighting abilities and pride in their service to their nation. Ambassador Walker later concurred:

> It was one of the blessings of the things we did there. By the time I got there [1988], it was an article of faith that we wouldn't go over 55.... The Congress certainly was looking at it weekly.... It was greatly beneficial in that the Salvadorans had to learn how to fight the war. We maintained that we were training the trainers, not doing the fighting.[40]

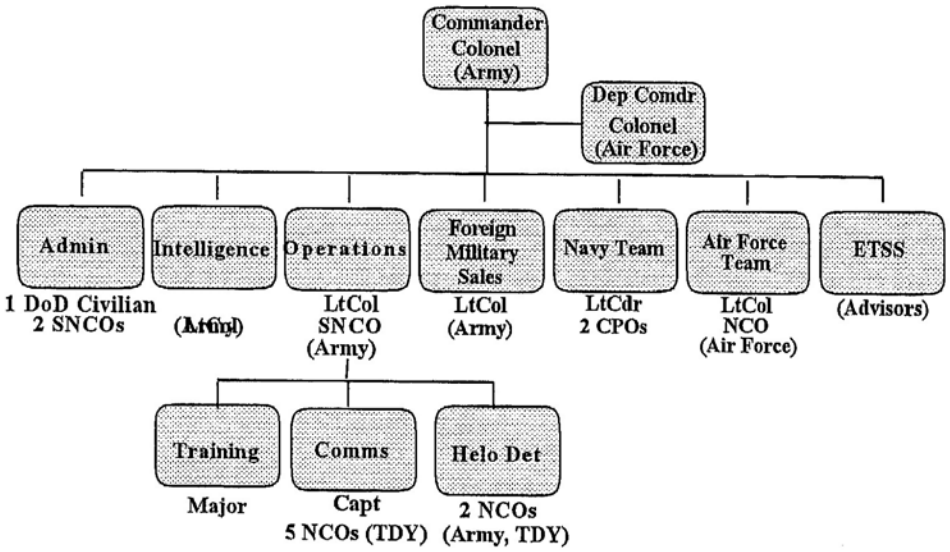

Figure 2: Organization of the USMILGP, ELSAL

USMILGP Organization

The USMILGP in El Salvador was organized as depicted in Figure 2.[41] The headquarters element consisted of 14 personnel who were assigned to the embassy, coordinated the U.S.-GOES security assistance effort, and managed the Foreign Military Sales Case Fund. Some of them, by the nature of their duties, also served as advisors (the senior Navy and Air Force representatives advised the ESAF *Marina Nacional* and *Fuerza Aerea* respectively.

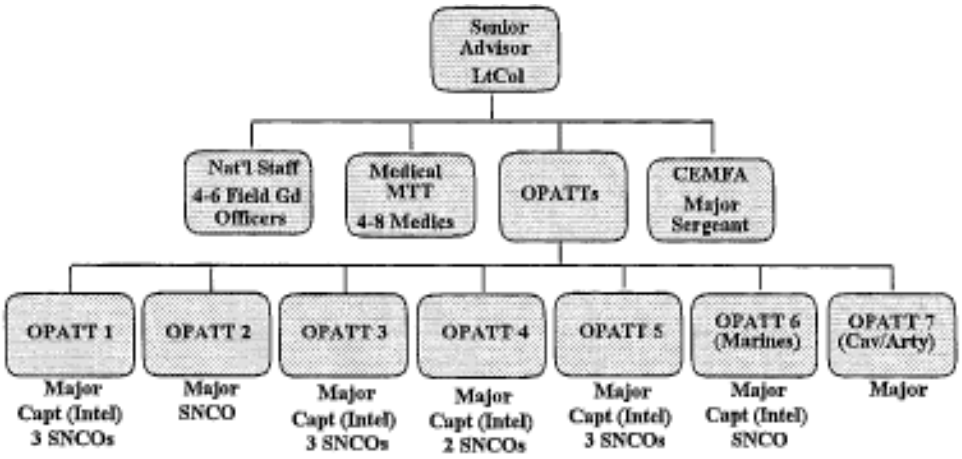

Figure 3: ETSS (Advisors) Organization

The bulk of the USMILGP in El Salvador consisted of the Extended Training Support Specialists (ETSS), organized as shown in Figure 3. These were U.S. military personnel deployed at ESAF request to provide military training and advice so that the ESAF could "assume the responsibility for training their own personnel."[42] More generically known as "field advisors," some of these men served in the ESAF's headquarters, but most formed Operations, Plans, and Training Teams (OPATTs) which supported the ESAF's operating forces. By mid-1986 all brigades, including the cavalry and artillery, and separate Military Detachments had OPATTs; the map of El Salvador (page vi) shows their locations. The OPATTs were the USMILGP's eyes and ears in the field. In aggregate, they also provided the thread of continuity in the professional development of the ESAF.

The Advisors' Tasks

There is a conceptual difference between military training and military education. Training is task-oriented; it focuses on teaching the mechanics of warfare. Once the trainees learn the task, the training is complete; it may later be evaluated empirically, and because many military skills are perishable, they must be refreshed as necessary. Military education, on the other hand, focuses on understanding the "why" of warfare rather than "how to It tends to be highly philosophical and subjective. Consequently, it takes more time to instill, and is more difficult to assess. It also assumes that the student has a basic grasp of the science of war, and is not merely a practitioner of violence. However, education has a lasting quality. The USMILGP depended upon the OPATTs to impart balanced doses of training and education to professionalize the ESAF.

The USMILGP's mission tacitly required the advisors to work themselves out of a job; they were there to train the Salvadorans to be self-sufficient. Nevertheless, there was plenty of work to be done, and it would take a long time to accomplish it. Appendix C shows the OPATTs' training and advisory tasks in broad terms. Although the two types of tasks are listed separately, they were not exclusive of each other. It was often necessary to train a member of a staff in a particular function while concurrently advising him of how best to proceed. Not all advisors were equally effective; some were better as trainers, others better at conveying theoretical or philosophical matters. All faced the challenge of designing training suitable for a soldiery with an average third grade level education; however, an officer corps with an ingrained superiority complex and a rigidly hierarchical system of command and control proved the biggest obstacle to change.

The seemingly random nature of the ESAF's officer assignment policy continuously

frustrated the advisor who felt he had made progress with a certain officer, only to see the officer transferred and that progress apparently nullified. Advising senior officers proved trickier because they often did not feel like listening to juniors who had less experience in fighting *their* war. Many listened only out of courtesy. Nevertheless, most officers displayed a genuine interest in hearing what the advisors had to share.

Advisors had greater success in accomplishing the training tasks because they usually had direct control--rather than only influence--over the subject matter and the training resources. Though the OPATTs practiced a "train the trainer" concept wherein they trained ESAF junior officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to train their own personnel, there were times when the OPATTs served as the principal facilitators for training. Some circumstances required an American to teach whole ESAF units new tactics and techniques. Other times, frustrated by ESAF lethargy, many an advisor took matters into his own hands. The ESAF officers and NCOs to whom fell the chore of training usually stepped out of the advisor's way, either conceding the American's greater professional skills or happily letting the *gringo* do their job for them. In either situation the advisor digressed from training the trainer to the detriment of the ESAF's professional development. All OPATTs routinely struggled with this dilemma.

The ESAF commanders recognized that units that dedicated some of their time to training nearly always demonstrated their new-found proficiency against the enemy soon after the training. Brigade and separate battalion commanders supported advisors' efforts with small-scale local training programs. Institutionally, however, regional commanders
were reluctant to pull troops out of combat operations for training purposes for several reasons: the continuous nature of counterinsurgency operations; shortage of training funds and resources;

and an endemic hesitancy to start any long-range programs until the ESAF Joint Staff *(Estado Mayor Conjuncto,* or *EMC)* disseminated guidance.

Pressed by frustration-filled reports from the OPATTs, the USMILGP headquarters realized that the ESAF's rigidly hierarchical system lent itself to a top-down approach. The USMILGP commander and national-level advisors frequently took OPATTs' suggestions and convinced the *EMC* of their value. When the *EMC* extolled the virtues of well planned and executed training, they in essence reflected the USMILGP headquarters' input and validated what the OPATTs stressed. Two successful examples of OPATT-generated, USMILGP-pressed, EMC-endorsed training that had ESAF-wide impact were a common-core recruit training curricula (adopted in the mid-1980s), and a Training Management MTT that traveled to each brigade and DM in 1992; the MTT members were ESAF officers trained by a handful of advisors. This approach of planting the seed at the top then cultivating it in the field had a longer lasting impact on the ESAF's development.[43]

Crucial to gauging the effectiveness of training is an evaluation process, the absence of which makes analysis of mission accomplishment extremely difficult, if not outright impossible. The most serious impediment to OPATT mission accomplishment was the imposition upon the advisors of a non-combatant status that prohibited them from participating in combat operations." Done with the intent of showing all concerned that the U.S. was not actively engaged in combat, the restriction had several drawbacks. The *FMLN* regarded the Americans as enemy troops, subject to the laws and fortunes of war; non- combatant status shielded no American from insurgent fire. In some cases, the restriction diminished the advisors' credibility as war fighters in the eyes of their hosts. Worst of all it prevented the advisors from consistently

assessing first hand the fruits of their labors. The restriction notwithstanding, advisors made their way to the field (sometimes sanctioned by the USMILGP commander, sometimes not) often enough to retain their credibility as war fighters and provide the USMILGP commander with some meaningful assessments.

On the positive side, the restriction ensured that advisors closely coordinated their out-of-garrison activities with USMILGP headquarters. More importantly, it forced OPATTs to routinely communicate with each other to share experiences and ideas. Since they could seldom conduct an empirical analysis of ESAF combat operations, they commonly resorted to intuitive judgments based on their professional knowledge and skills. While the OPATTs' Staff NCOs concentrated on training, the team chiefs and their intelligence officers stayed attuned to daily operations, read combat reports, and interviewed officers and enlisted men upon their return from operations.

Collectively, the OPATTs maintained a U.S. hand on the pulse of the ESAF's progress. Because the OPATTs accomplished the training tasks within a more compressed cycle, they proved easier to achieve and assess. The advisory tasks, which lent themselves more to military education, spanned the duration of the conflict; their impact on the ESAF are still subject to debate within U.S. circles. However, both the ESAF and the *FMLN*--the two parties whose opinions mattered most--came to accept the American military as a professionalizing factor in the institution most often associated with the war's causes.[45]

The Advisors as Role Models

The advisors' collective aim was not so much to defeat the physical enemy, the *FMLN,* as

it was to vanquish the institutional enemy within the ESAF--a rigid, often insensitive, even ignorant system of soldiering. While the advisors' military skills were essential to train and advise the ESAF to become more effective warfighters, it was their unspoken *bona fides,* their personal credentials as professional citizen-soldiers as, that had the long-term impact. Short of trying to impose American cultural ethics upon the ESAF, advisors reflected the soldierly virtues expressed in U.S. military leadership manuals like *The Armed Forces Officer,* a reference common among the OPATT chiefs. The advisors stood by their standards and were ready to explain why they believed in them.

The advisors were not infallible. An occasional advisor "went native." Some were seduced by the easy-going RN's culture and relaxed their self-discipline, losing sight of their purpose in El Salvador. Others succumbed to martial desires to actually seek a fight the with the guerrillas (rather than, by circumstance, find themselves in a fire fight). One U.S. Marine major set the USMILGP's record for the shortest time in country; apparently believing his status as an advisor in a Third World country permitted him to casts aside accepted U.S. military standards of conduct, he violated several USMILGP regulations shortly after his arrival, and was kicked out of El Salvador within eleven days.[46] The USMILGP dealt severely with these transgressors, imposing military punishment as

appropriate and expelling them from El Salvador. Ironically, these occasional negative incidents served as positive examples that the U.S. military maintained high standards of conduct and discipline.

Such infrequent transgressions aside, the advisors were self-assured professionals who stood fast by their roles as examples and mentors. Most displayed a grasp of a wide spectrum of

military duties. They demonstrated proper use of their authority (as trainers and advisors to the ESAF, not as adjunct ESAF leadership), acceptance of responsibility, and acknowledgment of accountability for their actions. Once they established their credentials in the art of war, the advisors became very credible when they spoke of protecting and honoring human rights and remaining loyal to the legitimate civil authority. They impressed upon their hosts that, while military service provided a ladder to status and retirement, it should be viewed as either a privilege or a moral obligation, a path for service to the people.

That message, repeated over ten years by the Americans' consistent example rather than their words, clearly got through. Slowly but surely, the ESAF saw how the best armed forces on earth conducted themselves. The advisors' influence upon the ESAF told over time as the number of incidents of human rights violations decreased to the point where, though not perfect or up to U.S. standards, the Salvadoran citizens began to trust their armed forces. Conversely, the guerrillas became more desperate, perpetrating more harassment and intimidation, and forcing recruitment and illegal taxation against the general population; they lost the moral high ground.

In El Salvador, the United States articulated a mission for the USMILGP and established an appropriate force level with which to accomplish the mission. Without fanfare, the U.S. employed a military strength--the discipline and moral character of its Armed Forces--to thwart an insurgency. Wisely, the U.S. did not tackle the insurgency directly by pressing U.S. force against guerrilla force; it attacked it indirectly by restraining itself to an unwritten limit of 55 U.S. military advisors to "combat" the ESAF's own critical vulnerability. In a sense, the U.S. mounted an asymmetrical offensive against the *FMLN* one that the insurgents were not prepared to counter. The degree to which the USMIILGP's effort impacted upon the overall course of the

war is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE USMILGP'S IMPACT UPON THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE EFFORT

The U.S. supported the El Salvadoran War on the moral basis that the Salvadorans required a major transformation in civil-military relations. The task of transforming the ESAF fell to the USMIILGP. Through their persistent instruction and personal example, the U.S. advisors focused on impressing upon the ESAF that the military served their citizenry. Having examined how the advisors accomplished the USMILGP's mission, the essay will now broaden its scope and appraise the USMILGP's contribution toward achieving the overall U.S. goal. This chapter will survey the key indicators of military success, then relate those indicators to the security assistance effort.

Measures of Military Success

At the start of the war, few Americans envisioned that a relatively small group of U.S. servicemen would significantly contribute to the U.S. security assistance effort, but as the war progressed, the collective and continuous impact of the USMILGP became more evident. The USMILGP's influence upon the ESAF had a collateral effect upon the GOES and the *FMLN* that helped drive both belligerents closer to the negotiating table. From the military perspective, there were three closely interrelated conditions that contributed to the war's end: (1) the ESAF evolved into a more professional force; (2)

civil-military relations improved; and (3) the FMLN lost popular support. These conditions occurred concurrently and gradually, but the first of these had a profound impact on the other

two. A closer look at these conditions can illuminate how the USMILGP's operational activities had strategic implications.

The legitimacy of the GOES was a key criterion for U.S. assistance. The Salvadorans had to maintain a democratically elected government, representative of the people, and accountable for the actions of the ESAF. The ESAF's leadership responded to the legitimization process on two crucial levels. First, they took necessary steps to exchange their Praetorian Guard mantle for one of a soldiery that demonstrated consistent support for democratic processes and subservience to civilian authorities. Second, and more importantly, they joined with the elected civil government to protect and defend the citizenry. These two reforms, begun in the early 1980s, took time to accomplish but had positive long-term implications. This occurred because of U.S. military influence.

About the ESAF's Praetorian Guard inclinations, Colonel James J. Steele, USMILGP commander from 1984 to 1986, asked rhetorically,

> Have we really changed their attitude towards democracy, their role in society, or have we just levered them into a behavioral change? [A]t this point [1986], it's too early to tell.... It's going to take a couple of presidential elections before you really begin to institutionalize that process. If you look at the attitudes of the officers, you see a change in terms of how they see the people and how they see their role in society.[47]

A 1987 study conducted by four U.S. Army lieutenant colonels provided a particularly stinging assessment of the ESAF.[45] They felt that U.S. leverage rather than the host's own initiatives prompted the changes in the ESAF. While they lauded the ESAF for striving to win popular support rather than simply chasing guerrillas, they found little evidence of institutional change. In 1987, the ESAF was barely five years into trying to correct the many deficiencies cited in *The Woerner Report.* Paradoxically, the U.S. colonels conceded that

institutional change takes time.

Certainly some "leveraging" occurred. The U.S. was not so naive to believe that the ESAF hierarchy's ingrained authoritarianism would change on its own. At appropriate times and to proportionate extents, the U.S. served its aid with the impetus of national power behind it. George Washington caution a fledgling Congress in 1776 that, "To bring Men to a proper degree of Subordination [sic], is not the work of a day, a month, or even a year."[49] His words rang true two centuries later in El Salvador. Many high-ranking officers disagreed with the changes in their ranks and in the GOES, and some even contemplated another coup. As late as 1989, one elite ESAF unit was accused of committing gross violations of human rights at the behest of their officers.[50] However, there were enough reformists within the higher ranks who, with the moral support of the USMILGP and the political and economic backing of the U.S., stood firm and ousted several of the extreme rightists in their ranks. By protecting the economic infrastructure, performing military civic actions (MCAs), respecting human rights, and supporting free elections, the ESAF increasingly demonstrated their transformation to their fellow citizens. An attitudinal change within the ESAF came in time.

Still, one may ask why it took so long for an army of some 56,000 men to defeat less than 12,000 armed guerrillas. On paper, the ratio of fighters *(ESAF:FMLN)* was seldom greater than *5:1*.[51] Not only was this ratio doctrinally insufficient to combat an insurgency; it was further reduced by the usual debilitating factors that afflict all armies
(e.g., casualties, illnesses, desertions), a nearly inviolable policy of authorized leave, and, most significantly, the need to defend key economic infrastructure sites that tied more than 50 percent of the ESAF to static positions. At any given time, ESAF offensive operations mustered less than

24,000 men, a ratio of barely 2:1! Yet, this apparently defensive mindset proved to the citizenry that the GOES truly meant to protect their economic welfare. The ESAF, as the principal guardians of the infrastructure, gained visibility and popular support.

Worried about their downward slide in popular support, the *FMLN* launched their October 1989 "final offensive" to revalidate their position as a political force, highlight the government's weakness and ESAF's ineffectiveness, and hopefully decrease U.S. support. They may have infused longer life to their waning cause, but they failed on the other three counts. The *FMLN* gained little more than enmity. After the offensive failed, the *FMLN* hierarchy displayed diminishing control over its factions; many of their "constituents" disagreed among themselves and with the peace process.[52] Their aggressive actions increasingly served more of a factional than united political purpose and quickened their estrangement from the population.

The U.S. reaction to the 1989 offensive was first surprise, then the debate about the moral issues and U.S. support resumed in Congress and in the media. In assessing the efficiency and morale of the ESAF during the 1989 offensive, Lieutenant General Bernard Trainor, USMC, criticized both organizations for their defensive mentality, saying that, "[i]t was a case of circling the wagons and driving the Indians away. ~ Unwilling to risk losing, the ESAF hung on until the insurgent offensive lost momentum. Though from a military standpoint Trainor correctly asserts that "to not lose is not to win," it was a sound strategy for the circumstances in El Salvador. Nearly all of the 1989 offensive's fighting occurred in the cities, mainly the capital, San Salvador. A vigorous counter- offensive by the ESAF most surely would have destroyed much of the people's homes and livelihood, seriously setting back GOES and ESAF progress. The ESAF took an arguably slow but definitely methodical approach to reclaim the turf. They demonstrated

fire discipline and a commendable concern for the safety of the citizenry, remaining sensitive to the needs and perceptions of the people. It soon became apparent that, whereas the *FMLNs* actions reflected overt attempts to grab power at the public expense, the democratically elected GOES and the ESAF were indeed making progress in social reform and civil-military relations.

Experience tells us that an insurgency cannot succeed without the support of the populace. During the early phase of the war, the FMLN generated popular support by espousing the human rights of an oppressed population. However, their support weakened as the U.S. and GOES recognized the social inequities and took actions to correct them. In time, the people developed trust in the army. Their growing support for the ESAF surprised the *FMLM* who attributed that support to the ESAF's professional development. Miguel Castellanos, an insurgent leader until 1985, said, "The support that came from the U.S. was decisive in bringing the right wing attacks to a halt."54 Without an oppressive right to blame for the country's woes, the leftist bent of the *FMLN* lost most of its impetus.

In March 1989, Duarte handed the reins of the Presidency to Alfredo Cristiani; the Christian Democrats yielded to the National Republican Alliance (ARENA) in the first peaceful transition of governmental power in the country's history.[55] Cristiani's popular election sounded the first death knell for the *FMLN;* his victory with 54 percent of the vote surprised the *FMLN,* whose own preelection polls had shown that they would win up to 16 percent of the vote, but their candidate, Guillermo Ungo, won only 3.2 percent. Joaquin Villalobos and Shafik Handal, commanders of two of the five factions of the *FMLM* seemed to concede that the *FMLN* knew it could not win, neither politically nor militarily; their abysmal showing encouraged the FMLN to negotiate with the GOES.[56] The ESAF's support for the electoral process and their recognition of

a legitimately elected body serves as a defining event in the struggle.

A critical period occurred during the truce. In spite of FMLN antagonism and much finger pointing between parties, the cease fire held mainly because the ESAF kept a tight rein on its forces. Per the truce agreement, the ESAF withdrew its units from the field, but remained in a semi-alert status in their respective garrisons. The truce gave them a chance to disband many units while concurrently turning their collective attention to training and conducting productive MCAs. The most significant evidence of the ESAF's subordination to civilian rule occurred in June 1993, when Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani asked several senior military leaders, including the Minister of Defense and the ESAF Chief of Staff to resign in compliance with the accords; all stepped down without protestation.[57] By May 1994, over 100 senior officers, many suspected of brutalities, had "retired" (in reality, purged per the peace accord).[58]

The crowning event in the transition from oligarchy to democracy occurred in 1994 when Armando Calderon Sol (ARENA) became President in an election that included the participation of the *FMLN* as a legitimate political party. With three consecutive presidential elections absent military interference behind them, El Salvador shows definite promise for developing into a full-fledged democracy. The multi-party democracy that rose from the conflagration in 1993 belied Mao's axiom that "political power emanates from the barrel of a gun;"[59] neither belligerent gained power through force of arms.

When the belligerents signed the peace agreement, the ESAF still needed help. Many of the professional virtues that the advisors tried to impart to the ESAF were not yet institutionalized. Soldiers saw little benefit to voluntarily serving their country; since most were *campesinos* (rural peasants), they felt compelled to work on farms or cooperatives and left the

service at first opportunity. The NCOs, who rose from the peasant-class soldiery, had little authority; for the most part, they merely relayed the orders of their officers. Many junior officers were reluctant to take initiative without specific guidance from their seniors. Some senior officers (majors and higher) still openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the GOES' handling of the negotiations with the *FMLN.* Thus, the ESAF retained a vestige of a stereotypical "Banana Republic" gendarmerie.

Nevertheless, the USMILGP's persistent effort nurtured a constituency among the ESAF that reflected a philosophy closer to the U.S. model. Colonel Steele noted, "They have accepted our advice and we accepted their views. There was mutual understanding and agreement on the whole spectrum of the [professionalization] program."[60] Drafted *campesinos* became proficient soldiers who respected human rights. NCOs received classes and training that concurrently facilitated their advancement in education level and military grade; those who served as instructors prepared and delivered periods of instruction to the troops. Junior officers, nearly half of whom were trained in the U.S., routinely taught classes to their troops which emphasized the laws of war. Brigade and *DM* commanders eagerly sought opportunities to conduct MCAs and to impress upon the UN observers with the ESAF's contributions to the national welfare. In 1992, the ESAF adopted a meritocracy system to determine officer promotions, shedding their old *tandon* system whereby academy classmates were promoted together by time in service regardless of competency.

The USMILGP contributed to the security assistance effort not only by training the ESAF, but especially by remaining consistently professional and so intolerant of any abuse of human rights that the ESAF's hierarchy could not ignore the influence. Of greater significance, the

FMLN also noticed the USMILGP's positive influence upon the ESAF and realized that the U.S. advisors were ironic allies in their professed struggle for human rights. The USMILGP's influence upon the ESAF had a collateral impact upon civil-military relations which increasing drew popular support away from the *FMLN* and toward the GOES. In this form of asymmetrical attack, the USMILGP comprised a small fraction of the total U.S. security assistance to El Salvador, yet achieved a disproportionately high results. At a time when U.S. resources continue to decline in the face of festering strategic concerns in Latin America, potentially high-yield investments of minimal assets provide the most lucrative way to employ those resources. A closer look at the overall security assistance effort in El Salvador will help underscore the potential for expansion of present-day SAOs.

The Effectiveness of U.S. Security Assistance

Throughout the war, military assistance accounted for a relatively small percentage of the total aid provided by U.S. security assistance (the actual amount varied from year to year). The U.S. State Department's Agency for International Development (aptly, "AID") provided most of the financial support, of which nearly 75 percent went toward the war effort. However, the effectiveness of economic aid is a broad subject that is not within the scope of this essay. Suffice to say that with AID support the GOES retained their credibility to rebuild and maintain the country's economic infrastructure in spite of insurgent sabotage. This satisfied the majority of the population to the extent that they maintained their support of the GOES. Of greater long-term significance, it permitted the ESAF to pursue the war on a much more moral basis, correcting their deficiencies while combating the insurgents, rather than just trying to "hang on" as

Ambassador Hinton had expected.[61]

Now, several years after the war ended, critics of U.S. support to El Salvador may point to post-war conditions in El Salvador as evidence of U.S. failure to resolve grating issues. With a much reduced ESAF no longer providing internal security and a nascent national police force spread thinly throughout the country, criminal elements are stretching the freedoms of democracy to the breaking point. Murders remain commonplace. The turmoil may slowly approach the boiling point reached in 1979, and prompt the still-evolving ESAF to again take matters into their own hands. Indeed, the hastiness of the U.S. withdrawal from El Salvador may have put the delicate democratization process in jeopardy. However, one must understand that the reduction of U.S. aid occurred after the belligerents signed the peace treaty, and coincided with the end of the Cold War and a large-scale reduction of the U.S. Armed Forces. Besides, the U.S. never intended to leave El Salvador in a state of complete domestic tranquillity nor with a capable police force. By remembering that the war began because political, social, and economic conditions were no longer acceptable to a large segment of the population, one should look at how these conditions changed, then determine whether U.S. security assistance succeeded. As with many wars, the interpretation of success largely depends on perspectives. Ambassador William Walker (198 8-1992) offers one reasonable viewpoint:

> The major reason why [El] Salvador had a successful outcome is that it had no clear-cut winner or loser. The GOES can claim that the *FMLN* didn't shoot their way into power, but the *FMLN* can tell their followers that what they really wanted was reform. The ambiguity of it made it difficult for either side to claim a victory.[62]

If he were presenting the El Salvadoran perspective, Ambassador Walker's statement about the war's outcome may seem correct, but the outcome was not merely a draw

between the GOES and the *FMLN.* The GOES transitioned to democracy, incorporating--in effect, politically defeating--the *FMLN,* and the ESAF gained the trust and confidence of the citizenry. Furthermore, Walker's statement omits the important perspective of the United States. Were U.S. strategists to accept his generalization, they would overlook valuable lessons in security assistance strategies.

The methodology of security assistance employed by the U.S. in El Salvador was slow, but deliberate and focused. The Country Team identified objectives that resolved the conflict. Their success largely depended upon the professionalization of the ESAF which would have been impossible without a unique method of employing the U.S. military. Future events in El Salvador may yet validate or negate the effectiveness of the U.S. security assistance there, but the military aspects of that assistance indicate that the U.S. can measurably influence the transformation *of Latino* militaries without resorting to *Yanqui* force of arms. Despite its continuing problems, the fledgling democracy in El Salvador abounds with potential and serves as an example of how USSOUTHCOM can retain its influence with El Salvador's regional counterparts.

CHAPTER 6

GUIDEPOSTS FOR RESHAPING LATIN AMERICAN MILITARIES

El Salvador stands as the only example of a successful U.S. intervention in a Latin American counterinsurgency. The investment of considerable U.S. resources balanced by a limited U.S. military presence helped the GOES stabilize their economy and turn their tottering *military junta* into a promising multi-party democracy. That the war occurred during the fading

light of the Cold War does not detract from its relevance in a presumably less threatening post-Cold War world. U.S. strategists must recognize that the nature of the struggle in El Salvador reflected an undercurrent of chaos and violence that lies dormant in many other Latin American countries. Some of the lessons from El Salvador may be incongruent with conventional wisdom about unconventional situations, and consequently may not be not assimilated into policy and budgets. However, when the U.S. cannot clearly perceive the next threat a region that is notionally at peace, it has all the more reason to think unconventionally about ways to proactively employ America's resources to their best advantage. There are several key aspects of the U.S. advisory effort in El Salvador that U.S. strategists should bear in mind when developing a military strategy as part of security assistance for another Latin American nation. This chapter will cite the key factors of the U.S. advisory effort in El Salvador that can serve as guideposts for providing an "advisory surge" to Latin America militaries. It will then highlight the key costs and benefits of an advisory surge. Lastly, it will identify nations in which application of this proposal may succeed, and where their introduction would likely prove useless.

Determining Guideposts for an Advisory Surge

An appreciation of the current problems that confront Latin American militaries combined with America's diminishing overseas presence challenges USSOUTHCOM to seek alternatives to offset its budgetary and material reductions. An alternative exists. SAOs form the nucleus of an expandable nation assistance effort. They have a firm grasp of the needs of the FIN and can translate the security strategy into operational terms. The U.S. can correct part of its security assistance deficiency by expanding military groups within selected SAOs in the mold of the

USMILGP, El Salvador to meet the increasing demands of military "engagement." Naturally, what worked in El Salvador will probably not work exactly in another nation, especially if it is not at war. Therefore, USSOUTHCOM must focus on several elements that are essential for a productive advisory surge, all of which must meet the specific needs of the RN.

Proactive Assessment of the HN's Security Situation. *The Woerner Report* exemplified the type of in-depth study required for an analysis of a task that carries such monumental importance as the transformation of a nation's civil-military relations. Unfortunately, that study occurred three years after the war started. Rather than hesitating until a RN's security requires a reactive and fiscally more costly FID response, the U.S. must focus its diminishing security assistance resources well before a crisis arises. Early assessment of a prospective HN's security needs is essential. The U.S. can more effectively generate constructive change within a framework of stability/security rather than waiting for a conflagration.

The U.S. and the FIN, as partners in a mutually beneficial endeavor, must examine the level of the threat and identify its root causes. When the partners agree to develop a program that centers on military reform, they must articulate the benefits which both sides will receive. Their strategy must identify its intent and the perceived end state. The partners will encounter difficulties in identifying what aspects of the HN military need reform, explaining how that reform will concurrently improve military effectiveness and social conditions, and delineating what is expected of each partner to accomplish the reforms. However, a thorough mission analysis can lead them to mutually acceptable criteria for achieving end state. Then, with a clear

vision of the end state and how to get there, the U.S. can tie its support to reforms within the RN and its military, leaving no doubt in either partner's mind of what is expected of each. Though the U.S. went into the El Salvadoran War without a comprehensive strategy, there is no excuse for repeating that error.

Unity of Effort. El Salvador provides a poignant example of the pitfalls of an ambiguous strategic vision. The early disagreements between Ambassador Hinton and General Nutting led to nearly two years of wrangling over policy issues. Their inconsonant views cost the U.S. valuable time in determining a strategy for assistance to El Salvador, gave the insurgency time to generate support, and consequently fostered desperation among the GOES and ESAF. Fortunately, *The Woerner Report* served as a point of departure from which to reverse the situation. Similar situations may arise when the ambassador, who leads the Country Team, lacks a clear understanding of U.S. strategic intent. The ambassador is the principal representative of the U.S., regardless of what USCINCSOUTH may think. He must obtain firm policy guidance from the U.S. President or Department of State and convey the administration's intent to USCINCSOUTH, who must then, in coordination with the USMILGP commander in the respective country, develop the military aspects of the strategy and receive the approval of the ambassador. While this bit of wisdom is not earth-shattering, it amplifies the imperative of a unified vision of the end state, without which the Country Team will flounder and the U.S. military effort will be wasted.

Structure and Organization of an Expanded USMILGP. Once the U.S. and the HN

agree that they need to implement an advisory surge, they must determine the size of the USMILGP. The number of U.S. advisors will primarily depend on the size of the HN military establishment. The U.S. must provide sufficient personnel to adequately cover the HN's military organizations and dispositions. A large and widely scattered army will require more advisors than a force that is centrally organized and located. Ideally, an advisor ratio should be based on one U.S. advisor per battalion/squadron or equivalent. By organizing the advisors into teams, this would amount to one three- or four-man team per brigade or regiment, concentrating their influence at the operational level. Certainly a higher ratio of advisors per unit will ease the burden of the advisors, but this might also be counterproductive. Too many advisors may lead HN military officers and training NCOs to relinquish the responsibility for training their personnel to the advisors, as occasionally happened in El Salvador.

As a point of reference, the OPATTs of USMILGP, ELSAL were organized along these lines. Structured and organized as depicted in Figure 3 and deployed as shown on the map (page vii), the OPATTs covered a lot of territory. In many cases an OPATT could have used an additional staff NCO, but as long as the OPATT retained its focus on training the trainers and providing advice, it seldom went wanting for personnel. The USMILGP was just barely the right size for the force it supported, but in the long run, 55 was a sufficient number to accomplish the mission. The Country Team should be the principal determinant of the actual size of the USMILGP.

The Advisors' Qualifications. An important qualification for U.S. advisors is their professional credibility, not merely in their language skills and cultural awareness, but in their

breadth of experience. Prospective advisors can gain the first two skills through training and indoctrination prior to their assignment; the third qualification can only be accumulated through, well, *experience.* The OPATTs in El Salvador consisted of majors, captains, and senior sergeants whose grades and experience levels were appropriate to the tasks at hand. The majors provided a link between company level ESAF evolutions and national staff activities. The captains and sergeants demonstrated to ESAF junior officers and NCOs that they, too, were significant contributors to national defense; the sergeants' particular closeness to the ESAF's training cadre and soldiery provided readily visible examples of the trust and confidence place on NCOs. A future advisory effort should consist of generally the same spectrum of grades and experiences.

Most of the advisors in El Salvador were U.S. Army Special Forces, but many others had no formal training in advisory duties. Some, especially the members of the other U.S. Services, were specialists in fields such as communications, engineering, naval warfare and amphibious warfare, and brought their unique capabilities to the USMILGP's repertoire. Their most salient feature was their broad representation of the U.S. Armed Forces as professional citizen-soldiers. In this vein, other U.S. regulars and reservists may be especially useful as advisors to HN militaries that may require a specific set of qualifications in their advisors. In some cases, a USMILGP may include lawyers and chaplains. The U.S. Army would bear most of the burden, for the preponderance of Latin American militaries are land-based forces. However, above the operational level (brigade/regiment), the service affiliation of the advisors is less critical, for they serve primarily as planners and mentors. In a joint military effort, each of the Services would provide personnel appropriate to the tasks required of them. Since U.S. Army Special Forces need not be the primary source of advisors, the U.S. can "spread load" the personnel

requirements among the U.S. Armed Forces and better tailor the advisory effort to meet the HN's needs.

The Pros and Cons of an Advisory Surge

As with any program that requires a shift in resources, the expansion of a military advisory group has associated advantages and disadvantages. Both duration and associated costs may deter an advisory surge. The transformation of a military establishment's ethos requires a long-term commitment, for the ingrained traditions and habits of any organization take time to reshape. The longer the program takes to achieve its objectives, the more it will cost. The two principal costs for the U.S. translate into military personnel structure and funding. In the midst of "down-sizing," USSOUTHCOM would have to obtain personnel whom the Services would be hesitant to surrender. Depending on the size of the force required to accomplish the mission, the still-shrinking Services may be hard-pressed to provide the right blend of qualified personnel in sufficient numbers. As for funding, USSOUTHCOM would have to redirect part of its declining budget to pay for the effort, and Congress would have to budget for a long-term commitment. One may argue that in today's fiscal environment, these two costs would be "show stoppers;" however, assuming that the partners agree that an advisory surge is essential to the HN's stability--and U.S. interests--neither time nor costs will dissuade the effort.

A perceived scarcity of personnel resources and associated fiscal requirements do not invalidate the potential benefits of an advisory surge. Besides the hypothetical benefit that U.S. advisors can promote democratic processes within a HN, both the HN and the U.S. would reap other advantages. The HN will witness the evolution of its military into a force that is better

trained, respective of human rights, and subordinate to civilian control. A U.S. military advisory presence**,** as an element of security assistance, carries an implicit security umbrella that allows a friendly government to institute social, economic, and political reforms in a democratic environment that further legitimizes its governance.

For the U.S., credibility is the principal gain. The developing democracies in this historically oligarchic region will see that the U.S. is sincere about helping them democratize in a peaceful environment that concurrently fosters regional stability. Employment of advisors can accomplish U.S. strategic purposes without the deployment of U.S. combat formations; yet, USSOUTHCOM enhances its operational reach throughout the region, for U.S advisors in one country can have collateral effect on its neighbors. In El Salvador, for example, the advisors drew on a U.S. helicopter and training presence based in Honduras, which fostered a sense of security in Honduras, and arguably kept Nicaraguan *Sandinistas* from spreading their revolution to their neighbors. Also, assignment of U.S. advisors provides continuity in a long-range program and broadens the cadre of foreign area officers, thereby expanding USSOUTHCOM's area expertise. In the long term, an increase in U.S. personnel and funding are inconsequential compared to the program's potential benefits.

The Applicability of an Advisory Surge

Not all of Latin America requires--nor desires--large doses of U.S. military advice. Some fragile democracies are in great danger of succumbing to military takeover and may eagerly accept a program of reform similar to El Salvador's. Others whose governments retain a heavy military influence may be more resistant to change; these would require greater U.S. diplomacy

and political leverage to accept U.S. military advice. By focusing on pivotal countries, the U.S. can tailor the size of its advisory surge to accomplish a strategy appropriate for the RN involved. A survey of potential pivotal countries is provided below (also refer to Figure 1 in Chapter 2).

Where the Model May Not Apply. Not all Latin American nations are struggling with civil-military relations. Uruguay, for example, is a nation at peace. Its military is one of the few in the Western Hemisphere that is fully subordinate to civilian ministrations. Though the Uruguayan Armed Forces might benefit from contacts with the U.S. Armed Forces, they could probably carry on very effectively without much U.S. military advice. Costa Rica is another nation that does not require U.S. military assistance. It enjoys one of the healthiest economies in the region and has no army to defend its borders; it employs a national police force that has for decades maintained law and order without oppressing the citizenry.

The militaries of other nations in the region display various stages of subordination to civilian control, yet may not require (nor desire) U.S. military advice. Argentina and Chile, formerly run by military strongmen, retain military establishments that remain autonomous from civilian authority. Still, they show progress in their civil-military relations. Though some tensions between the two neighboring states exist, their armed forces seem to be supportive of democratic processes within their respective countries.

Where the Model May Work. Guatemala currently stands at the extreme corner (lower right in Figure 1) of the field in which the introduction of a U.S. advisory surge would reap benefits. More than any other *Latino* nation today, Guatemala's record of human rights violations

resembles the abysmal civil-military relations that prefaced the El Salvadoran War.[63] Close to that corner are Bolivia and Honduras, both of which struggle against terrorism and violence with a transitioning military; closer still is Peru, whose transitioning military simultaneously combats narcotraffickers and the *Sendero Luminoso* insurgents. Civil-military relations in these nations beg an increased U.S. advisory surge.

The USMILGP's effort in El Salvador illustrates to many Latin Americans how U.S. professionalism can influence their military establishments' transition to institutions that are more supportive of democracy. Two years after the U.S. withdrew its advisors from El Salvador, the Guatemalan Minister of Defense visited his neighboring country to observe U.S. reservists and guardsmen in humanitarian actions with Salvadoran troops. He remarked of his observation: "If the citizen-soldier concept were to be adopted [in Guatemala], it would help integrate our Army with the civilian community and would result in better understanding and cooperation between both sectors."[64] He implicitly offers the U.S. another opportunity to enlarge democracy and remain engaged in Latin America; his comment is all the more significant because of Guatemala's festering insurgency and long-standing abuses of human rights.

A U.S. military advisory surge is not a panacea. Indeed, it has limited applicability because not all Latin American nations require the kind of military assistance proposed herein. Still, this proposal offers USSOUTHCOM a potentially high-yield alternative to offset its current deficiencies. As General McCaffrey asserts, "Latin American military leaders ....are prepared to consider Southern Command's ideas on promoting regional cooperative security and military-to-military confidence-building measures."[65] Latin American leaders recognize that the U.S. Armed Forces are viewed with respect by the American public, are well schooled in human rights and

the laws of war, and contribute to the public discourse on national defense. Latin American leaders have left the door open for U.S. military influence. The U.S. must seize the opportunity.

CHAPTER 7

THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE: ENLARGING U.S. MILITARY ENGAGEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

A democratic society's armed forces exist to defend its nation from foreign and domestic enemies, and to protect its society's democratic processes. This fundamental *raison d'etre* forms a pivotal issue to U.S. security interests in Latin America. Most Latin American armed forces have deeply rooted traditions that diametrically contradict democratic processes; they have historically given their allegiance to oligarchic regimes and retain a dangerous potential for seizing political power. USSOUTHCOM is not blind to the problems that permeate Latin American stability, and by extension affect the security of the United States. However, USSOUTHCOM's diminishing resources heighten the difficulty in devising an enduring strategy that focuses U.S. efforts on "enlargement and engagement." Given the historical trends among Latin American militaries and the foreseeable downward slide in USSOUTHCOM's resources, several conclusions can be drawn from this discourse.

As more Latin American nations embrace democracy, they increase the imperative for their militaries to shed their rigidly Praetorian ethos and adopt military virtues more supportive of democratic processes, with subordination to civil authority representing the core of their transition. The militaries' transformation from instruments of political power to bulwarks of democracy will encounter difficulties stemming from their hierarchy's hesitance, uncertainty, and in some cases outright resistance. Frustrations may lead them to abandon the attempt at transition and opt for more traditional--and oppressive--forms of governance on their own terms, thereby fomenting civil unrest, retarding the progress of democracy, and thwarting U.S. security

interests.

The progress of democratrization throughout Latin America will remain a tentative proposition unless the U.S. takes a more proactive stance to foster civil-military relations in the region. This paper presents a narrow segment within the wide spectrum of what the U.S. may do to reshape the ethos of Latin American militaries and promote democratization. Political and economic aid also play key roles in nation assistance, and merit further examination in correlation to expansion of a SAO. Naturally, before the U.S. can augment its military presence in other countries, the prospective HNs must recognize the need for change and request U.S. assistance; accordingly, the receptiveness of potential host nations also bears further study. The U.S. must carefully identify the nations whose dominating military establishments endanger civil-military relations and convince them of the benefits of a U.S. advisory surge. In this sense, the employment of U.S. military advisors is less a weapon of the Armed Forces than a "shaping" instrument of the Country Team. By expanding selected SAOs, the U.S. can employ advisors to mentor Latin American militaries as they transition.

The task of imbuing a rigidly hierarchical military establishment with a new ethos is daunting, but not impossible. Rather than tasking the U.S. Armed Forces to fight a conventional war, U.S. advisors will have to employ their leadership and training skills in unconventional ways. Like their OPATT predecessors in El Salvador, a relatively small yet influential group U.S. servicemen can provide a means for a struggling democracy to quell its insurgents, professionalize its armed forces, and support democratic processes at a much reduced cost to the United States.

APPENDIX A

UNDERSTANDING U.S. NATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

NATION ASSISTANCE. A key element of U.S. foreign policy that employs the Armed Forces to support U.S. strategy during peacetime is nation assistance, a type of "operation other than war." Nation assistance provides a HN with programs to promote stability, develop sustainability, and establish institutions responsive to the needs of the people. [Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations,* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 February 1995), V-8]

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT (FAA). (1961); the basic law providing the authority and the general rules for the conduct of foreign assistance grant activites/programs by the USG.

INTERNAL DEFENSE AND DEVELOPMENT (IDAD). The full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and to protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. It focuses on building viable institutions (political, economic, social, and military) that respond to the needs of society.

FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE. Participation by civilian or military agencies of one government in any of the programs conducted by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.

SECURITY ASSISTANCE**.** Groups of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act [FAA] of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act [AECA]of 1976, as amended, and other related statutes by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense related services, by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives. [This is a broad term for the programs and organizations that provide a variety of aid to foreign countries in promoting the full range of U.S. national interests while bolstering an ally's security. Depending on the perspectives of the various U.S. agencies that contribute to security assistance, the term itself can have subtly different meanings. This paper uses the definition from the DISAM.]

SECURITY ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS (SAOs). The generic term SAO encompasses all DoD elements, regardless of actual title, located in a foreign country with assigned responsibilities for carrying out security assistance management functions. ["Military assistance" is itself an umbrella term for several types of aid provided by the SAOs. Among the forms of military aid is "Advisory and Training Assistance" that is "conducted by [an absolute minimum of] military personnel assigned to overseas security assistance management duties ... .who are detailed for limited periods to perform special tasks."* Sixteen SAOs employing less than 100 U.S. military personnel represent USSOUTHCOM throughout Central and South America. [United States Southern Command, Quarry Heights, Panama Organizational Chart (Staff Directory), 1 August 1995. The Chart also shows SAOs in Mexico and Panama].

COUNTRY TEAM. Senior members of USG [U.S. Government] agencies assigned to a U.S. diplomatic mission overseas, and subject to the direction and supervision of the Chief, U.S. Mission (Ambassador). Normally, such members meet regularly (i.e. weekly) to coordinate USG political, economic and military activities and policies in the host country. [U.S. military personnel assigned to SAOs remain under the operational control of their respective CINC. Appointed officials, public servants, and U.S. military personnel in Country Teams that help integrate U.S. inter-agency objectives into a firm campaign plan for their respective country, and serve as an example of the proper relationship between the military and civilian control.]

MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP (MAAG). A joint service group based overseas which primarily administers U.S. military assistance planning and programming in a host country. "MAAG" encompasses a variety of similarly-named groups (e.g. Military Groups, or "MILGPs") that exercise responsibility with a U.S. Diplomatic Mission for security assistance and other related matters.

EXTENDED TRAINING SUPPORT SPECIALISTS (ETSS). DoD military and civilian personnel technically qualified to provide advice, instruction, and raining in the installation, operation, and maintenance of weapons, equipment, and systems. ETSS are attached to an overseas SAO rather than assigned, and they are carried on the Joint Table of Distribution (JTD), but are not provided as an augmentation to the SAO staff ETSS may be provided for overseas assignments for periods of up to but not exceeding one year, unless specifically approved by DSAA.

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Definitions from: Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM), *The Management of Security Assistance,* (Wright-Patterson AFB, OH: DISAM, March 1993).

APPENDIX B

TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND THEIR DEFINITIONS

BIRI	*Batallon de Infanteria de Reaccion Inmediata* (Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalion, approximately 1, 100 men)
Bda. Inf	*Brigada de Infanteria* (Infantry Brigade)
Campesinos	Rural peasants (the majority of El Salvador's population)
Cuartel	Barracks (actually, the entire military facility)
DIT	*DelincuentaslTerroristas* (delinquent/terrorist, common ESAF term for a guerrilla)
DM	*Destacamento Militar* (Military Detachment)
ERP	*Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo* (People's Revolutionary Army); Maoist FMLN guerrilla faction
ESAF	El Salvadoran Armed Forces
Estado Mayor	Brigade or higher level staff
EMC	*Estado Mayor Conjunto de la Fuerza Armada* (Armed Forces Joint Staff)
FAES	*Fuerza Aerea de El Salvador* (El Salvadoran Air Force)
FAL	*Fuerza Armada de Liberaci6n* (Armed Forces of Liberation); Moscow-oriented FMLN guerrilla faction
FARN	*Fuerza Armada de la Resistencia Nacional* (Armed Forces of National Resistance); socialist FMLN guerrilla faction.
FMLN	*Frente Farahundo Marti para la Liheracion Nacional* (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front); the umbrella organization of the five insurgent factions: ERP; FAL, FARN, FPL; PRTC.
FPL	*Fuerza Popular de Liheracion* (Popular Forces of Liberation); Moscow-oriented FMLN guerrilla faction.
GOES	Government of El Salvador
GN	*Guardia Nacional* (National Guard)
Masas	The masses (usually a reference to *FMLN* sympathizers),

Military Civic Action	The use of preponderantly indigenous military forces on projects useful to the local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health sanitation, and others contributing to economic and social development, which would also serve to improve the standing of the military forces with the population,
MN	*Marina Nacional* (Navy)
ONUSAL	*Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en El Salvador* (the UN observer mission in El Salvador)
PRTC	*Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos* (Party of Central American Workers); Trotskyite FMLN guerrilla faction.
PN	*Policia Nacional* (National Police).
Zona Militar	Military zone

APPENDIX C

OPATT TRAINING AND ADVISORY TASKS

TYPE	TRAINING	ADVISORY
Individual	Train soldiers assigned to units' training committees (i.e. train the trainers)	Interface with unit commanders (Bn & Bde) on operational matters
	Assist primary staff w/training of junior staff officers	Interface with units' principle staff officers
		Coordination with USMILGP's National Staff Advisors
Specialized	Develop special POIs as requried	Integration of special operations with counterinsurgency operations
	Serve as primary instructors only when absolutely required	Integration of intelligence with operations
	Supervise/critique special courses (e.g. Commando, Recon, Snipers)	Integration of combat support & combat service support w/operations
Collective	Supervise/critique battle drills	Staff planning and coordination
	Supervise/critique small unit tactical training	Evaluate effectiveness of combat operations
	Emphasize use of standard programs of instruction (P0I)	Monitor progress of human rights issues; report violations

[1]U.S. President, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement (NSS)* (The White House, February 1995), 7.

[2] Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy, U.S. Army (Ret) and Colonel Trevor N, Dupuy, U.S. Army (Ret). *The Encyclopedia of Military History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 1275-1277.

[3] Gabriel Marcella, "Forging New Strategic Relationships," in *Military Review,* October 1994, 34.

[4]Richard Downes, "New Security Relations in the America," 11/20/95 12:26:10 National Defense University, Strategic Forum, September 1995, downloaded from NetScape, 20 November 1995.

[5] J.F. Holden-Rhodes, and Peter A. Lupsha, "Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Gray Area Phenomena and the New World Order," Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 212.

[6]U.S. President, *NSS,* 22.

[7]Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 20 December 1993), 1-6.

[8]U. S. Army War College and University of Oklahoma Conference, *Managing Contemporary Conflict: Pillars of Success,* 14 February 1996. Two of the discussants were former U.S. State Department officials who had served in El Salvador.

[9]MTTs and DFTs are not synonymous. MTTs are deployed from the U.S. at host nation (HN) request using security assistance funds to train HN personnel. DFTs are deployed by the U.S. with HN concurrence using U.S. service-oriented dollars to train U.S. personnel; the emphasis is on training the U.S. personnel.

[10]GEN Barry R McCaffrey, U.S. Army, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Southern Command, "Statement before the House National Security Committee" (8 March 1995), A-2.

[11]International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1994-1 995* (London: Brassey's, 1995), 191.

[12] Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM'), *The Management of Security Assistance* (Wright-Patterson AFB, OH: DISAM, March 1993), 101.

[13]Department of Defense, National Military Strategy of the United States of America (NMS), 1995, 9.

[14] McCaffrey, "Statement," 10. Programs like the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and the Expanded IMET can make a significant contribution to improve military-civil relationships. However, budget cuts have reduced the number of students who participate in these programs. In 1990, over 6,700 Latin American IMET students came to the U.S.; the number dropped by 75% by 1994. Thus, we are losing the ability to establish long-term relationships that transcend nationality, support civilian democratic leaders, and are linked to U.S. doctrine.

[15]McCaffrey, "Statement," 13. See also MGEN Michael S. Davidson, Jr., USA, and Ken Spalding, "The U.S. Army Security Assistance Command," *The DISAM Journal* (Wright-Patterson AFB, OH: Winter 1995-1996), 1-24.

[16]Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, eds., *El Salvador: An Oral history of the Conflict from the1979 Insurrection to the Present* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), ix. "Forward" by Lieutenant General B.C. Hosmer, U.S. Air Force, President, National Defense University, 1988.

[17] Manwaring and Prisk, 57. The army figure, estimated by Dr. Alvaro Magana, provisional President of the Republic of El Salvador from 1982 to 1984, more accurately reflects the total of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces, which included the air and naval forces, plus the *Guardia Nacional* and the *Policia Nacional.*

[18] Manwaring and Prisk, 362.

[19] Manwaring and Prisk, 60. Salvadoran General Jaime A. Gutierrez admitted, "There were three fundamental, grave deficiencies in the armed forces--a total lack of equipment, lack of training, and mostly it was not being prepared to confront the type of problems we were facing."

[20] Steffen W. Schmidt, *El Salvador: America's Next Vietnam?* (Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1983), 182.

[21] Douglas Farah, "Salvador's New Leader Pledges Conciliation 'No More Confrontation,' Calderon Asserts." *Washington Post,* June 2, 1994, Sec. A. For more information on economic aid, specifically post-war reductions, see also Kieran Murray, "Rightist Wins Salvadoran Presidency, Faces Strong Left, "Reuters *World Service,* April 25, 1994, Monday, BC cycle.

[22]BG Mark R. Hamilton, U.S. Army, Deputy Director for Joint Warfighting Capability Assessment, J-8, Joint Chiefs of Staff (Commander, U.S. Military Group, El Salvador, 1990-1992), interview by author at the Pentagon on 11 October 1995. Hamilton states that the *FMLN's* political leaders were not adverse to waving the Red banner as their rhetoric warranted. He points out, "There were certain socialist ideals that the *FMLN* wanted to pay lip service to; communism offered a credible alternative to liberal democracy that made it a handy rubric under which [the *FMLN* could] practice their own social agenda."

[23]Manwaring and Prisk, 7. Ungo was elected as Vice President of El Salvador in the 1972 election. He would have served under President-elect Jose Napoleon Duarte as the first executives elected without the influence of the landed oligarchy or ruling military in 40 years, but a *junta* discredited the election and set up their own regime.

[24] LtCol Charles G. Armstrong, US. Marine Corps, "Blueprint for Intervention," *Marine Corps Gazette,* January 1990, 55-59. Armstrong, U.S. Naval Attaché to El Salvador from 1988 to 1990, spent much of his tour in the field with the ESAF. Based on his observations of the ESAF's effectiveness, he specifically advocated sending in the Marines to help fight El Salvador's war.

[25] Schmidt, iv. A Gallup Poll dated 15 March 1981 showed that 40% of the public felt El Salvador would turn into another Vietnam; 39% of those polled had no idea of what was happening in El Salvador.

[26] Schmidt, iv.

[27] Hamilton, interview. Hamilton relates that the possibility of large-scale U.S. military intervention played on the minds of the *FMLN.* Insurgent leaders like Joaquin Villalobos and Raul Hercules confided to U.S. truce negotiators that even as late as 1991, they feared commitment of U.S. combat formations. Ambassador Walker corroborated this point. However, he notes that "the introduction of [U.S. combat formations] was not very likely. We're talking here about what is arguably the most contentious foreign policy issue of the '80's. The idea of committing ground forces to [El Salvador] would have been a political nightmare."

[28] Manwaring and Prisk, 71.

[29]Manwaring and Prisk, 240. Understandably concerned over perceptions that the military was still running the country, now backed by the U.S. military, Ambassador Hinton remained reluctant to allow USSOUTHCOM to participate in developing the National Plan for El Salvador, *"Unidos Para Reconstruir"* (United to Reconstruct), in essence, a political-military campaign plan emphasizing civic actions and development projects.

[30] Manwaring and Prisk, 114. *The Woerner Report* remains a classified document. Searches of several libraries, to include those of the Pentagon and Congress, failed to produce a copy of the report. As with most classified documents, details thereof available in other literature is incomplete and often misinterpreted. I synthesized my interpretations from the interviews collected in Manwaring's book. For a different opinion on *The Woerner Report,* see Raymond Bonner. *Weakness and Deceit: US. Policy and El Salvador,* New York: Times Books, 1984

[31]Manwaring and Prisk, 215.

[32]Manwaring and Prisk, 18.

[33] Major Adolfo Martinez, USMC, "Operations, Plans, and Training Team Six (OPATT-6) Team Chief Post-Deployment Debrief (12 July 199 1-1 July 1992)," Sixth Military Zone OPATT, U.S. Military Group, El Salvador. Unpublished briefing presented to USMC Coalition and Special Warfare Branch, MCCDC, Quantico, VA.

[34] El Salvador, MTTs were deployed at ESAF request using ETSS funds; team members were counted as advisors in country. DFT members were not counted as advisors, though the ESAF usually got some training value from the DFT as well.

[35]Manwaring and Prisk, 243.

[36]U.S. President. National Security Decision Directive 82. "United States Policy Initiatives to Improve Prospects for [CLASSIFIED] El Salvador." 24 February 1983. In the Marine Corps University Library microfiche collection. Fiche no 01705 *of Presidential Directives on National Security from Truman to Clinton.*

[37]*El Salvador: A Country Study,* 2d ed., by Richard A. Haggerty, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, DA Pam. No. 550-150 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990), 226. In Manwaring, Ambassador Pickering, GEN Nutting, and COL Waghelstein all speak of the "55," but none set an exact date nor explain how the number was reached.

[38]Hamilton, interview.

[39]Manwaring and Prisk, 407.

[40] William Walker, Vice President, National Defense University, (U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, 1988-1992), interview by author at the National Defense University, Fort L. J. McNair, Washington, DC on 5 December 1995.

[41] Martinez, "OPATT-6 Post-Deployment Debrief."

[42] JCS Pub 3.07.1, IV-1l.

[43] Martinez, "End of Tour Report" (U.S. Military Group, El Salvador, 30 June 1992), 11. Submitted to Commander, USMILGP, ELSAL; copy to USMC Coalition and Special Warfare Branch, MCCDC, Quantico, VA.

[44]Author's Note: I could not determine the actual source that imposed the restriction. It probably arose out of the early disagreements between the U.S. Ambassador/State Department and USCINCSOUTH/Department of Defense, and the recommendations of *"The Woerner Report."* The restriction was in effect by 1982; GEN Nutting testified before Congress that, "The rules of engagement under which our personnel in El Salvador operate give us limited operational feedback and opportunity for training effectiveness evaluation."

[45] Walker, interview. Ambassador Walker relates that Joaquin Villalobos stated to the U.S. Congress that the *FMLN* wanted U.S. military personnel remain in El Salvador to continue their positive influence on the ESAF.

[46]LtCol Alfredo Cortez, U.S. Marine Corps. Chief, OPATT-3, El Salvador, 1986-1987; U.S. Marine Corps Representative, USMILGP, Colombia, 1993-1995. Interview by author at Quantico, Virginia on 25 January 1996.

[47]Manwaring and Prisk, 219.

[48]LTC A. J. Bacevich, USA, and others, *American Involvement in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador* (Ft Leavenworth, KA, 1989).

[49]Col Robert Debs Heinl, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1966), 328.

[50] Thomas W. Lippman, "1989 Salvadoran Atrocity Posed Agonizing Choice for U.S." *Washington Post,* April 5, 1994, Sec. A.

[51] Martinez, "End of Tour Report."

[52] Martinez "End of Tour Report."

[53]LtGen Bernard E. Trainor, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired), "El Salvador: The Baffle for the Cities,." in *The Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1989), 11.

[54]Manwaring and Prisk, 278.

[55]*E1 Salvador. A Country Study,* xxiii.

[56] LtCol H.T. Hayden, U.S. Marine Corps, "Revolutionary Warfare: El Salvador and Vietnam, a Comparison," *In Marine Corps Gazette,* July 1990, 53.

[57]Farah, "Salvador's New Leader...."

[58]Bernard Aronson, "The Man Who Saved El Salvador," *Washington Post.,* May 11, 1994, Sec. OP/ED; "El Salvador's Salvation," *Christian Science Monitor,* May 5, 1995, Sec. Editorial.

[59]Heinl, 245.

[60]Manwaring and Prisk, 292.

[61] Hamilton and Walker, who served together as the key members of the country team during 1990-1992, both assert that, with exception of the population in the few FMLN-controlled regions, El Salvadorans wanted no part of the war, much less the *FMLN's* agenda.

[62]Walker interview.

[63]Dana Priest, "U.S. Ties to Guatemalan Military Come under Intense Srutiny; CIA Activities Prompt Pentagon Review of Involvement," *Washington Post* (May 9, 1995), Sec. A.

[64]McCaffrey, "Upbeat Outlook for Southern Neighbors," *Defense 95,* 30.

[65]McCafftey, "Upbeat...," 27.

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